THE Reconstructionist

Vol. IX. February 4, 1944 Shebat 10, 5704 No. 20

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the Reconstructionist

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Vol. IX. February 4, 1944 Shebat 10, 5704 No. 20

EDITORIALS

JEWISH RIGHTS IN PALESTINE—EQUAL OR SPECIAL?

THE text of the American Jewish Committee's memorandum, submitted to Ambassador Halifax, makes interesting reading because it reveals the true issue involved in the Jewish demand for a national homeland.

The Committee tries very hard to make the issue one of *discrimination*. The White Paper bars Jews from entering the land and from buying land *because* they are Jews. "The American Jewish Committee . . . does urge that the discrimination against Jews as such with respect to land ownership and immigration is wrong in principle and a violation of the legal duty of the Mandatory."

But at once difficulties arise. If Jews ask to be admitted into Palestine, only on the same basis as others, and no more, what is the reason for all the fuss about "national home," "Balfour Declaration" and "the Mandate"? In order for Jews not to be discriminated against in their immigration to the United States, is it necessary to refer to special documents or the interpretation of legal questions? Obviously there is more involved than mere discrimination against the Jew. What is involved is special *privilege for* the Jew.

The American Jewish Committee apparently senses that an appeal against the White Paper is more than a cry for equality, but actually a plea for the implementation of *special rights* for the Jews; but the Committee is reluctant to come out with it. Instead, it keeps pointing to the main issue without identifying it.

First, the memorandum reminds the ambassador of the Balfour Declaration, in which Jews were promised that "they might find a home in the country with which they had an ancient bond." ("Ancient bond"—a special factor). Next, "the primary purpose of the Mandate" is referred to, "the establishment of a national home for the Jews" ("national home"—obviously, a different status from that of the Jews in other lands).

Then Halifax is reminded of Lloyd George's statement in 1930, when the Passfield Paper was being fought. At that time, Lloyd George pointed out that the "dominant idea of the Mandate (was) the 'recognition of the special position of the Jewish people in the country whose name they have made immortal, and the conferring on them of special rights and interests in that country.'" This state-

ment is not protested by the American Jewish Committee. It merely goes on to say that "As a result of this opposition, the British Government virtually withdrew the Passfield White Paper." The implication is that Jews today should have special rights in Palestine, in which implication the Committee concurs.

The American Council for Judaism may be said, at this point, to be the only truly orthodox opponent to the White Paper. They stick to the point: Jews should have no more and no less than anyone else with regard to immigration (despite differences of need). They "base (their) attitude on this fundamental fact: that proposals which exclude Jews, as Jews, from right of entry and restrict Jews, as Jews, from the acquisition of land, do violence to the fundamental concept of democratic equality and thus to the very purposes and ideals to which the United Nations are pledged." Jews should have "equality to migrate wherever there is an opportunity for migration." The Council leaders seek "freedom of migration opportunity based on incontestable rights and not on special privilege."

That is the crux of the matter. The American Jewish Committee is prepared to accept the doctrine of "special rights" or privileges; the Council is dead against it. The whole Zionist position is based on the assumption that Jews have a special relationship to Palestine, and are, by law, by sentiment, by ethics, by every decent standard of judgment, entitled to special rights there. To that extent, the American Jewish Committee adopts the Zionist position. Now, if the Committee could only see the next, and inevitable, implication! They should recognize that the special rights necessary to establish a national home must include the right to govern the conditions of immigration, taxation, tariffs and land purchase; in other words, the right to self-government.

ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACKS ON CHILDREN

YOUNG "hoodlums" or "delinquents" in such widely separated places as Boston, Rhode Island and New York City, have for some time been attacking Jewish children, synagogues and Jewish school buildings. The victims, their parents, the congregations concerned, and the Jewish defense agencies have known these facts. Their efforts to obtain redress or police protection have proven futile. The Anti-Defamation League and the newspapers have finally made the facts public. Did they act wisely?

Two helpful consequences did follow in each place. First, the number of attacks has been reduced materially. Second, the civic authorities have taken action. The governors of Massachusetts and Rhode Island have instituted investigations which have brought greater police cooperation. In New York City, the Mayor has succeeded in making more effective the protective vigilance of the police. The public school authorities have taken steps to make more effective their teaching of Americanism and respect for racial and religious differences. Religious leaders of all three faiths have issued public utterances denouncing religious bigotry and racial hatred. They have even formed local interfaith committees in some neighborhoods to formulate a common program against such hatreds.

Whatever differences of opinion may exist among Jews concerning the proper steps to be taken to combat anti-Semitism, all groups will agree that our children must be protected against physical or mental injury no matter whence the attack comes. Mothers and teachers must teach their children the art of self defense and must organize for group defense where the police fail in their duty. At the same time, all will agree that when the attackers are young "hoodlums" or "delin-

quents," police protection is only a temporary remedy. Fundamentally, the problem is educational and requires practical solution at the hands of educators in the public schools and in the religious schools. To the extent that these youthful attacks have followed a common pattern in all three places without police interference, there is room to suspect the ominous influence of adults whose un-American and hateful organizations have gone under cover since Pearl Harbor. Obviously, the handling of such influences and their sources must be the responsibility of the police, the military, and civic agencies generally. To the extent that the offenders are children, they must have the friendly discipline and intelligent guidance of parent and teacher. The religious teacher in particular can play a most important rôle in this situation.

Anti-Semitic attacks by children against children create a delicate as well as a complex situation. Serious as is the physical injury involved for the victim and his attacker, even more severe is the mental injury to both of them. Baneful as are the consequences to both victim and attacker, even more dangerous are their examples to other children. It may shock some of us to learn that, following the recent publicity, some cases have been reported where children have joined attacking groups for the adventure involved, while in other cases, children have committed acts to attract attention and sympathy. For the sake of such children, it may be well for newspapers to deal cautiously with children's anti-Semitic behavior. Because the situation is so full of complications and because it requires tender treatment, the schools, public and religious, must assume the responsibility of such treatment.

What can the public schools do? They can provide recreational activities in buildings and playgrounds after school hours for children of all racial and religious groups where they can learn, under supervision, to play with and respect each other. The funds for these purposes have been curtailed by New York City authorities. These funds should be reinstated. The public schools can also help by more effective Americanization courses and by getting rid of bigoted, anti-Semitic teachers.

What can the religious schools do? They can support true Americanism through the teaching of the religious sources of democracy. Religious teachers can help develop within children attitudes of respect for religious differences by stressing, through practice as well as precept, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. They can establish interfaith committees in every neighborhood for and among children as well as adults. They can teach children that religious differences are accepted by Americans as desirable and that because the right to such differences is guaranteed, they help to unite us in war and in peace, and thus constitute a democratic bond. Religious teachers can prove their loyalty to their own faith and their appreciation of America if they will also help to cultivate reverence for the other man's religious and racial loyalties. Religious teachers frequently boast of the religious foundations of American democracy. They must take the blame if these religious foundations are inadequate to effect democracy.

THE PRESIDENT'S BILL OF ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

THE President's message to Congress on the "State of the Union" should allay any fears that some may have entertained with regard to his stand on democracy for home consumption. The forces of reaction in Congress, and they are very strong, have long been sniping at his policies, and it was hard for him to reply in view of his pre-

occupation with military and international affairs, and his need for standing above partisan squabbles. Many, even among his admirers, had begun to think that, in the interest of national unity, he would henceforth, soft-pedal the motif of social justice on which he had harped with such vigor in the early years of his administration. But in his notable message he returned to that theme and gave clear evidence that he regarded it as the motivating purpose of his international as well as his national policies. If his earlier statement acclaiming the "four freedoms" was a contribution to the *torah* of democracy, his present *perush* on the meaning of "freedom from want" in his "bill of economic rights" is an even greater contribution. In this he renders explicit and concrete the implications of the abstract "right" to that freedom. This is what he understands by it:

"The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries, or shops, or farms, or mines of the Nation;

"The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;

"The right of farmers to raise and sell their products at a return which will give them and their families a decent living;

"The right of every business man, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;

"The right of every family to a decent home;

"The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;

"The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age and sickness and accident and unemployment;

"And finally the right to a good education."

This Bill of Rights must be applicable to all "regardless of station, race or creed."

The achievement of these goals, moreover, is not relegated to some messianic future "in the end of days." They must determine our national legislation right now, while the war is going on. The problems of winning the war and of maintaining "a fair and stable economy at home" are not unrelated; the solution of each is indispensable to the solution of the other. Therefore the President laid before Congress the following five-point program:

1—"A realistic and simplified tax law, which will tax all unreasonable profits, both individual and corporate. . . .

2—"A continuation of the law for the renegotiation of war contracts, which will prevent exorbitant profits and assure fair prices to the government. . . .

3—"A cost of food law, which will enable the government (A) to place a reasonable floor under the prices the farmer may expect for his production and (B) to place a ceiling on the prices a consumer will have to pay for the necessary food he buys. . . .

4—"An early re-enactment of the stabilization statute of October 1942. . . .

5—"A national service law, which, for the duration of the war, will prevent strikes, and, with certain appropriate exceptions, will make available for war production or for any other essential services every able-bodied adult in this nation."

"These five measures together," says the President, *"form a just and equitable whole. I would not recommend a national service law unless the other laws were passed to keep down the cost of living, to share equitably the burdens of taxation, to hold the stabilization line, and to prevent undue profits."* (Italics ours.)

The President will have a hard time carrying through this program, for powerful pressure groups who are eager to re-

tain a privileged position are opposed to it. They are concentrating their fire especially on the President's advocacy of a national service law. Organized labor sees in it a weakening of its own position, which has largely been gained by recourse to the strike. It does not like to be deprived of that ultimate sanction even though it is pledged not to resort to it during the war. War profiteers oppose the proposal, no doubt because it is tied up with the other measures designed to take the profit out of war. Instead of attacking these measures directly, they attack the national service proposal out of a pretended fear for the enslavement of labor. Some of the hostile press has chosen to interpret the President's insistence on the integral character of his legislative program as a disingenuous effort to leave a way open for him to withdraw from his position if a national service bill should prove unpopular.

To us, however, such a measure seems eminently fair. In a national crisis, in which we authorize our government to send men from their work and from their homes to face danger and death in foreign lands, by what right can a citizen plead exemption from service in any capacity whatsoever, if the government deems that service necessary for winning the war? "Fair for one, fair for all" is the slogan that the President suggests for the national service. And if the President insists that the national service law be tied up with the other laws for economic security, stability and justice at home, it is obviously because that tie-up is essential to protect those employed in the national service from falling into want and destitution while industrialists heap up vast profits from the war.

We, therefore, urge: Back our commander-in-chief! He will lead us to victory in war and to security and economic justice in peace.

REALITIES AND VALUES

AN EXHIBIT SHOWING THE progress of Jewish development in Palestine will soon be held in Moscow. The material for the exhibit was sent by the Victory League of Palestine, which has delivered ambulances to the Russian army as a contribution from the Yishuv. Apparently one of the consequences of Russia's closer relations with the Western Democracies has been the discontinuance of her former line with regard to Zionism, which considered it a mere enterprise of British imperialism. The Palestine exhibit in Moscow is a happy augury for the eventual legitimization of Zionism in Russia. Should Russia's appreciation of Palestine Jewry's contribution to her war effort result in her taking a sympathetic stand on Zionism, the movement would have won a great political victory. Moreover a new bridge would have been constructed between Russian Jewry and the Jews of other countries. We welcome every such token of the end of Russian Jewry's isolation.

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PALESTINE SEEMS TO HAVE the magnetic power to attract Jews from the most remote and isolated communities, so long as they are simple-hearted and not given to sophisticated rationalizations of Jewish self-hate, like our American Jewish euthanasians. We learn from a J.T.A. dispatch from Jerusalem of a Jewish tribe in southern Arabia numbering 75 souls. After having lived for centuries among Arabs, separated from the rest of Jewry, they sent a delegation to Aden to contact a representative of the Jewish Agency. The delegation made a three-weeks journey on foot to get there. "We have heard," they said to the representative of the Jewish Agency, "that the Jews are returning to the Holy Land; why should we be left behind?" The Agency is trying to arrange for the admission of the entire tribe to Palestine.

We hope that they will be admitted and will find in Palestine all for which their hearts crave.

THOSE WHO PROFESS TO FEAR that Zionism will mean the reversion of Jews to an isolated and self-centered existence, and the abjuring of all ambition for an important role in the civilization of mankind should reflect on the following item of news. There was recently held in Washington a conference on international reconstruction called by the Cooperative League of the United States. Israel Mereminsky, speaking for the General Cooperative Association of the Histadrut, showed how the Jews in Palestine, working in a country still subject to feudalism, were tranforming the desert into fertile land through the cooperative idea. "The cooperative," he said, "is bringing a higher standard of living. Palestine may be regarded as the first instance where the cooperative idea has been successfully applied to colonization." Dr. James Warbasse, president emeritus of the Cooperative League and pioneer of the cooperative movement in America, emphasized that "the Jews are building up a national economy in Palestine on a cooperative basis and the Arabs are beginning to emulate the Jewish example." The significance of the discussion at the conference can best be gauged when we consider that there were present representatives of governments and of cooperatives from China, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, England, Greece, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Brazil, Canada, the Philippines, and New Zealand. The Reform protagonists of the Jewish "mission" prate a great deal about brotherhood. But the essence of brotherhood is cooperation. Can they show any concrete achievement in teaching cooperation and brotherhood to the world comparable to the lesson that the Palestine *yishuv* is demonstrating?

THE HOUSTON CONGREGATION reaches new depths of absurdity as it goes along. A resolution recently adopted (by the way, how do they manage to get their members together so often for resolutions? Don't they ever go to business?) charges, according to the JTA dispatch, that "some of the entrance requirements to the (Hebrew Union) College militate against admission of sons of Reform families." Of course, the entrance requirements militate strongly against infants, North American Indians, Melanesians and others ignorant of Judaism—not against sons of Reform families alone. Another resolution claims that the 1943 Central Conference Resolution, stating that "there is no essential incompatibility between Reform Judaism and Zionism," violates the 1937 decision of that body. Pray, does not the 1937 decision "violate" the 1885 decision? Well, on an otherwise doleful Jewish scene, there is always Houston for a laugh.

DREW PEARSON'S "WASHINGTON MERRY-GO-ROUND" recently described an interview with Vice-President Wallace by a young college editor. It was an amazing example of Wallace's profound knowledge and love of the Bible. He found war profiteers in a verse in Amos, and inflation in another verse. In Micah he discovered rural electrification, farm security and the Atlantic Charter—and no professor of homiletics would have the heart to accuse him of bad homiletical manners. His best *midrash* was on: "The stone which the builders rejected is become the headstone of the corner." In that verse, he said, "I see a reference to all the rejected peoples—the minorities all over the world. The rejected people grow strong. . . . That's something we will have to watch in making the peace. It must be a fair and generous peace . . . or the vanquished will become strong by the very fact of being oppressed."

THE VALIANT EFFORTS OF A small group are beginning to provide Jews in New York with the semblance of an artistic and esthetic life. This small group should be encouraged. As they grow and others become interested, Jewish life will become more and more interesting and creative. We are therefore urging our readers to take note of several events in the field of Jewish art. On January 29, the Yiddish Scientific Institute opens an exhibition of photographs by Roman Vichniac on the subject: "Pictures of Jewish Life in Prewar Poland," at 535 West 123rd Street (Open: Mondays 2-4 P.M.; 6-8 P.M.; Thursdays, 2-4 P.M.; 6-9 P.M.; Saturdays 2-6 P.M.) On January 30th, the Hebrew Arts Committee of the Histadruth Ivrith presents a program of drama, dance and music at the Hunter College Auditorium. And on February 6th (Sunday evening) at Town Hall, Jacob Weinberg, with the assistance of the Jewish Education Committee, presents the fourth annual Festival of Jewish Arts. Encouragement and experience are already beginning to yield us a rich and exciting harvest in the realm of music, art, drama, and dance.

Authority in Jewish Life

By JACOB AGUS

CONSERVATIVE Judaism rejects the antinomian interpretation of Reform and maintains that Judaism, without the discipline of Jewish law is impossible. At the same time, the movement is unwilling to accord absolute obedience to Jewish law, as it is actually found in the recognized codes of Orthodoxy. To rest content with the convenient maxim that the truth is somewhere between two uncomfortable alternatives is clearly unsatisfactory. When the question of truth is involved, compromise is intellectual bankruptcy. In seeking a way out of this dilemma exponents of Conservatism are wont to apply the concept of "Catholic Israel."

The Doctrine of Catholic Israel and Its Limitations

The implications of this concept are indeed profound. To the extent to which it emphasizes the authority of Jewish practice, it is, of course, recognized by the *Shulhan Arukh.*

Rabbi Moses Isserles refers to *minhag* (practice), almost always, as the final authority. In this sense, the principle of "Catholic Israel" could only serve to petrify the norms of the Jewish way of life, restricting the area of freedom in Jewish law almost to the vanishing point. Especially is this true if the term is interpreted vertically, as well as horizontally, to include the generations of Israel's long past, as well as all of contemporary Jewry. The concept of "Catholic Israel" can become a guiding principle of progress in Judaism only when it is interpreted as the basic principle of Jewish sacred law. In Orthodoxy, Jewish practice is a kind of proof of Jewish tradition. It is also sometimes construed as having the force of a vow, made to supplement legal prohibitions. In Conservatism, Jewish practice becomes the source of Jewish Law—of its sanctity as well as of its validity. This amounts to a transmutation of Judaism at its heart. Of the triad, God, Israel, Torah, which in traditional, unreflective Judaism are of nearly coordinate importance, neo-Orthodoxy emphasizes the element of Torah; Reform Judaism insists that the Jewish idea of God should be-

come the sole determinative principle of Jewish life; Conservatism emphasizes the element of Israel—in other words, the normative values which are embodied in the experiences and aspirations of the Jewish people.

The fascination of this new emphasis, caught in the apt term "Catholic Israel," obscures the many connotations which lend force and meaning to it. There is the lingering influence of the historical-legal school of Savigny which maintains that the legal codes of a nation, with their seeming paradoxes, irrational complexities and absurdities, are the records of the evolution of the nation's inner soul and therefore inviolate—a thesis which was often employed as an effective method of rationalizing political reaction; there is the inverted prophetic attitude of the professional historian—history is judgment—hence, what has been is what ought to be; there is the recognition of the fact of immanent revelation, akin to the Moslem principle of *ijma,* which is based upon an alleged saying of Mohammed, "My people will never agree on an error"; there is an implied belief in the "national-soul" of Israel, after the manner of a Krochmal, Smolenskin or Ahad Ha'am; there is the natural, literally "conserving" attitude of genuine piety, which strains to slow down and halt the process of deterioration.

But reliance on Catholic Israel involves us in the following dilemma to which Dr. Gordis called attention in an article on "Authority in Jewish Law" in a previous issue of The Reconstructionist (Vol. VIII, No. 14). On the one hand, the norm for Jewish life is furnished by the actual practice of the vast majority of Jews. On the other hand, the application of this norm to Jewish life today would sanction only a minimum of observance—a measure of religious practice which is neither spiritually satisfying, nor intellectually defensible. The shift of emphasis from Torah to Israel is clearly insufficient, either as a motive for Jewish ceremonials or as a dam against the rising tide of indifference and irreligion. Dr. Gordis suggests the acceptance of Torah-Israel as the basic source of authority. The two terms limit and explain each other. Only that part of Israel need be taken into consideration, which accepts the sanctity of the Torah; only that part of the Torah need be considered as valid, which is actually observed by the "faithful remnant" of Israel. But the desperate futility of this solution must be apparent. On the speculative side, it substitutes the erratic fancies of the masses for the principles of reason and refinement; on the practical side, it furnishes no vision of the future and hence no guidance in the solution of any pressing problem of Judaism. It merely serves notice that Conservatism will not be in the vanguard of Jewish religious life, nor will it be content to follow up the rear, but that it will seek to find its place somewhere betwixt and between. It is evident that the concept of "Catholic Israel" cannot really be applied as a guiding maxim of Jewish legislation, until the time when Israel and the Torah are once again linked together, in theory and in practice.

Reconstituting the Authority of the Law

The problem which actually confronts us is, therefore, the reconstitution of authority in Jewish life, not in Jewish law. In the established grooves of Jewish law, the degree of authority and source of authority are clearly defined along every step of the way. It is only by lifting oneself outside the realm of Jewish law, and holding up its precepts to the light of one's own judgment, accepting some and rejecting others, that a standard of values becomes necessary as the basis for sound

judgment. The fact is that Jewish law is not only a body of ceremonies and practices; it includes its own *shakla v'tarya,* its basic principles and its methods of legislation. Certain types of rabbinic ordinances may be abrogated by the fact of universal non-observance, for instance, but, the prohibition of *shaatnez,* of shaving and of the taking of interest cannot possibly be taken out of the law, no matter how clearly and universally they are honored in the breach rather than in the performance. The soul of Jewish law is its theory of authority and the implications of this theory for our day are as clear as the verdicts of the Chofetz Chaymim's "Mishnah Berurah." Along this line of reasoning, there can be no escape from the strictest Orthodoxy.

There is, of course, the problem of reconstituting a supreme Synhedrion and reestablishing the authority of the former *s'mikha* (authoritative ordination of rabbis). But this inner problem of Jewish law is not the one which is of immediate concern. The problem of all who are interested in the preservation of the values of Jewish tradition in their modern setting is the one of authority in Jewish life. The distance between theory and practice among non-Reform Jews is so vast that the entire Conservative movement stands unbalanced. It insists on the traditional *method* of prayer, when the habit of praying is utterly neglected. It proclaims the validity of the Sabbath laws, knowing very well that the "best" members of its congregations are not Sabbath observers. It insists on the laws of *kashrut,* while the dinner meetings of Zionist districts, which are dominated by Conservative rabbis, are often non-kosher. Inevitably, the words of the Conservative rabbi assume a hollow ring. It is easy for them to declare that their followers are "sensitive to the problem of their non-observance, because they wish to respect the authority of Jewish Law." May not the cynic inquire, "How long will their conscience bother them? And is it an unmixed spiritual good to be forever plagued by the tension between one's professed faith and one's conduct?"

The task of reintroducing the spirit of obedience to authority in Jewish religion may be divided into its theoretical and practical phases. Upon the degree of our success in these two fields depends the very continuance of Jewish Law. Out of the interaction between these two fields of endeavor, the governing principles of Jewish law in the future will emerge, for law is a compromise between theory and life (in Judaism, a compromise between *din* and *rahamim*). We shall discuss these two phases of our problem separately.

The Need for a Living Faith As Basis of Authority

Since religion is the core and substance of Jewish civilization, the degree of authority that prevails in Jewish life will depend upon the extent and intensity of Jewish piety. To the pious person, piety is the supreme ideal, the crown of life. It needs no other justification. It is a creative, dynamic force, that is inwardly progressive in the highest sense, though in outward forms it is quite conservative. A basic element of Jewish piety is the feeling of being part of the eternal community of Israel. Hence, the validity of the principle of "Catholic Israel." But, it is a "regulative maxim," not an absolute principle, since the basic justification of any precept is the contribution it makes to the development and channeling of the feeling of piety. Whatever precept no longer evokes the inner response of the sense of piety of our people is no longer valid in itself. Its justification must then be considered in the light of its associations, such as its origin, it place in the con-

sciousness of living Jews, its place in the spiritual tradition of our people, etc. All these contributions depend in their turn for their ultimate justification upon the ideal of piety.

Our central problem, then, in the field of theory, can be expressed in the following two questions: Is piety a supreme virtue? Is Jewish piety psychologically justified? The first question revolves round the place of the God-idea, in the consciousness of modern man. This problem is far vaster than the mere logical demonstration of the existence of God. For piety is a much more complex phenomenon than reasoning. While it may be true that atheists and materialists number but a few, most people have no basic convictions and their professed beliefs seldom rise beyond the level of lip service. The idea of God can be the most meaningful of all ideas in the arsenal of human logic, and it can also be the most meaningless. The degrees of meaning depend not so much upon the definition of the term as upon the measure in which it becomes the instrument of reorientation of one's whole life.

To rekindle within the hearts of our people a living faith in the God of Israel is no easy task. More than any other religious and historical group, the Jews have been affected by the skeptical and cynical aspects of the modern spirit. Any poll of the religious attitudes among college students reveals how far we have fallen behind other groups in keeping alive the flame of faith. This undeniable fact is a stinging indictment of the religious leadership of American Jewry. For it cannot be maintained that the Jewish religion is any less consistent with the spirit of the modern world than is Chistianity. Nor are Jewish people by nature more sophisticated and less reverent than other people. The founder of the Habad movement believed that, imbedded within the heart of every Jew, there was the smoldering fire of the love of God. Have we fallen so low in respect of piety that we must now assume an inherent irreverance in the heart of every Jew? No rabbi will concur in this estimate of our people. In all humility, rabbis should admit that Jewish religious leadership is to blame. Too many rabbis are continually preoccupied with this and that problem in Jewish life, and are forever piling up mountains of bookish arguments on one side or the other, while they blissfully ignore and forget their primary responsibility as religious teachers.

It is lamentable that there are available in the English language so few books on the Jewish religion which can be presented to an intelligent high-school or college student as a modern manual of our faith. We have confirmation material, of course. That is "business." Few of the books used for confirmation even take up the challenge of the philosophies current in the present age. In most cases, they are adapted to the minds of unquestioning, "nice" children. We also have anthologies of Jewish sacred literature, selections from the Talmud, etc, which bear the mark of time and are not relevant to the modern intellectual situation, without prior interpretation. We have a plethora of books on nationalism, antisemitism, historical subjects and the like. But, we have not yet built up a variegated and significant literature that would show how Judaism stands in relation to the other faiths of the world, how it bears up in the light of modern science and philosophy, how the vast fields of modern learning, properly understood, may contribute to the enrichment of the Jewish religious consciousness; how the idea of God develops with the growing mind of man and is by no means outdated; how the myriad-faceted tragedy of Israel, viewed against the background of world history, was never without universal implications and profound meaning; why piety is so important that

martyrdom in its name is the highest virtue; what the ceremonies of Judaism mean today, and "why do the heathen rage?"

Wanted—A New Musar Literature

We need a whole new field of literature. For years Jewish scholarship proceeded on the supposition that ours is the age, not of creation, but of the proper cataloguing of all that has been created in the fruitful periods of Jewish history. The typical Jewish savant was the bibliographer, for the task of Jewish scholarsip was conceived to be the "scientific" demonstration of exactly what Judaism and the Jewish people were at any given period of Jewish life. As Max Wiener points out in his article "We Are History" in a recent issue of The Reconstructionist (Vol. IX, No. 4), what Judaism is and what it shall be are as important as what it was, provided, of course, that you believe in the present value of Judaism and in its future.

We have to create a modern *musar* literature (i.e., a literature of Jewish ethics)—one that shall start from the exigencies of actual life and lead to the heart of Judaism. Employing the forms of philosophical argument, of psychological analysis of the novel and short story, of poetry, allegory and the sermon, this new *musar* literature must be imbued with the spirit of piety and reverence. Drawing upon the conclusions of modern scholarship, it should point the road to the eternal values of our ancient tradition.

Such a literature cannot be evoked by merely wishing for it. An organizational apparatus must be created that shall offer aid, encouragement and leisure time to those with talent for such writing. A comparison with Christian groups at this point is again very much in our disfavor. I do not know of any one occupying the post of philosophy of religion at any of our seminaries. Needless to say, there are any number of such men great and small, in American universities and Christian seminaries. Is not this fact in itself as damaging an indictment against Jewish religious leadership as any that may be cited? How can we expect great works in this field to be produced if busy men, occupied in other fields of endeavor, must be relied upon to create them?

Two reasons are sometimes cited in justification of this anomaly. In the first place, it is argued that philosophy of religion is a general subject, which therefore does not fall within the purview of a Jewish seminary. To be sure, philosophy cuts across sectarian boundaries, and piety is, within limits, a universal phenomenon. This fact does not relieve us of responsibility in this field. On the contrary, if the universal pretensions of Judaism are to mean anything at all, we should concentrate our highest mental efforts in these fields because of their universal scope. Are we prepared to allow the essence of Judaism to be sacrificed either to ancient, petrified doctrines, unrelated to the modern world of thought or to recent religious trends, evolved out of the intimate experiences of other faiths? True enough, we are a numerically small group in comparison with the dominant Christian faiths. The Jewish people, however, was never ready to concede the principle of majority rule in the field of the spirit.

Another reason often given for the lack of emphasis on theory in Jewish learning is that, in Jewish piety, it was the performance of the ceremony that mattered, not the doctrine connected with it. This half-truth is a travesty of the Jewish faith. The underlying *kavvanah* of every ceremony was expressed in the words of Maimonides, "thus did His Wisdom and Will decree." Overt acts were indeed required for the administration of disciplinary measures but no Jewish scholar, in his senses, would deny that any one who

disbelieved the principle of *Torah min hashamaim,* was regarded as having no share in Israel's destiny, even though he continued to observe all the minutiae of Jewish law. I know of no enumeration of the 613 commandments which does not contain a commandment to *trust* in God, to fear Him and love Him. In the actual records of Jewish piety, apart from technical philosophy, in the popular *musar* books and in the esoteric kabbalah literature, the lore of *"taamei hamitzvot"* (the reasons for the precepts) is as a matter of fact, the central axis upon which all theosophic speculations center.

In addition to the general field of piety, we need to encourage research in the psychological roots and fruits of the Jewish form of piety, which has been molded by Jewish law. Piety is an amorphous attitude which becomes concretized and defined through the external acts that it inspires. Anthropology teaches us that whenever men took their relation to God seriously, they proceeded to evolve a regimen of conduct as an expression of and training for piety. Various devices were employed in the diverse religions of mankind. How do the ceremonies of Judaism compare with those of other religions? What are the ideals of piety that the practice of Judaism inspires? How do these ideals stand up in the light of modern knowledge and thought?

The facts of Jewish history and, in particular, of the evolution of Jewish law need to be studied from this standpoint. They should be fitted together so as to provide a record of the attempt of deeply religious men to train and develop the feelings of piety. Such a construction of the inner history of Israel is infinitely closer to the facts than any "modern" sociological or economic interpretation of the development of Jewish law. In this manner, the study of Jewish history becomes itself an act of piety.

Special attention must be paid to the problem of determining the relation of personal piety to the feeling of being an integral part of a group. The manner in which group-consciousness lifts one out of the confines of self and predisposes one to become aware of his relation to the Absolute must be carefully explored and documented. For it is upon the existence of this relationship between the feeling of piety and the sense of kinship in a historical group that the mightiest pillar of modern traditional Judaism must ultimately rest.

All these questions seem to be irrelevant to the problem of authority. They are indeed irrelevant to the consideration of the principle of authority implicit in Jewish law. But they are of prime importance in the task of providing theoretical justifications for the acceptance of Jewish law.

In brief, the argument in this section is that the theoretical justification of modern traditional Judaism is a vast field, which we have so far only begun to explore. The willingness to assume the yoke of Jewish disciplines is predicated upon a measure of intellectual conviction and emotional orientation, which in their scholarly as in their popular phases, we must seek constantly to deepen and to expand. We must bring into being a new literature, planted solidly upon the soil of truth, as it is given to us to know truth, and rising therefrom to the ethereal heights of faith. To the extent to which we succeed in carrying out this task, we shall have laid the theoretical groundwork for the wider acceptance of disciplines in Jewish life.

The Problem of Reinstating Jewish Observance

From the practical viewpoint, the problem of authority in Jewish life consists in the fact that the codified sacred law of Judaism no longer governs the conduct

of the vast majority of so-called "traditional" Jews. When the rabbi preaches about the observance of the law, he is taken to refer to the law, as it is codified in the *"Shulhan Arukh."* The requirements therein listed are too numerous and difficult for the average congregant. The hoped for revival of piety may indeed lead to greater observance, but the fact is that most people do not even consider total observance as a live issue. The result is a wide gulf between theory and practice, which makes a mockery of the Jewish faith.

What is the solution to this problem? We reject the Reform solution because it is a negation of historical Judaism. It sanctions non-observance of tradition, without offering a system of piety to take its place. From the standpoint of religious vitality, the problem is not one of more or less observance, but of more or less piety. And we recognize, furthermore, as a fact of anthropology, that piety seeks to express itself in ritual observances. Our task is to restore to the ceremonies of our faith their once potent power of kindling the spirit of piety. Reform Judaism is practically a new religion but without that mystical upsurge of piety and deep conviction which alone lend vitality to a new faith and assure it a lease on life.

We regret also the attempt of some Reconstructionists to proclaim a new code of what may "reasonably" be expected of observant Jews. Religion is not founded upon arguments of "reasonableness." Such a guide would not increase the degree of observance among Jews, nor would it advance the spirit of piety among them. We make bold to propose herein a frankly "revivalist" plan, as a systematic endeavor to solve this problem.

We suggest it as a practical proposal for the purpose of reconstituting the spirit of authority and self-discipline in Jewish life. We confess that the plan is quite naive, that it carries overtones which are repugnant to us, trained as we are in the liberal and humanistic tradition. But we insist that some such plan is inevitable if Judaism is not to become a caricature of itself.

1. A set of practices and maxims of conduct should be formulated by a representative body of Jewish laymen and rabbis, which will ultimately constitute the minimum requirements of all who wish to belong to the Conservative movement. No one who does not accept this regimen of conduct, or who, accepting it, violates its standards in the opinion of a duly constituted court shall be accounted a true disciple of traditional Judaism.

2. This group of ceremonies and principles should be selected on the supposition that any one who does not observe them, does not live Judaism to the extent that he may be counted in the fellowship of Israel and does not contribute to the maintenance of Israel as a religio-cultural fellowship.

3. The principles included in this list of minimum requirements should be chosen from every phase of Jewish life. They should include matters of personal practice (such as putting on *tefillin*), and of participation in public worship; items defining one's duty to contribute to charity and educational institutions and one's obligation to impart religious instruction to one's children; items relating to the maintenance of high ethical standards in business and social life, and clauses concerning one's responsibility to Israel and our ancient homeland.

4. It should be made crystal clear that the list of minimum requirements is not a substitute for the *Shulhan Arukh,* but a temporary device designed for the purpose of reintroducing the spirit of self-discipline in the lives of our people. A dam must be erected to stem the tide of indifference to Jewish law. If erected too high, it will hold a very small

number of Jews; if placed too low, we gain nothing by this procedure. The point at which the dam should be erected must be determined by men who revere the past of Israel, who, have a keen appreciation of the spiritual forces of the modern world, and who care for the future of Israel.

5. It is not contrary to the letter and spirit of Jewish Law to publish a list of such minimum requirements. It was always considered a meritorious deed to make a vow, pledging the observance of a *mitzvah*. It is understood, of course, that the plan falls in the legal category of *horaat shaah"* (temporary emergency legislation).

6. Objections will be raised to this proposal on the ground that it turns religion into laws. There is merit to this objection insofar as it refers to that increment in religion which can never be formulated in legal terms—its spontaneity, its spirituality, its profound tone of consecration, its mystical feeling and its sense of dedication. But, then, law is not meant to replace religion, but to aid it to overcome the weakness of the flesh. Judaism was always a legalistic religion. It can hardly be disputed that, judged by the yardstick of developing the spirit of genuine piety, Judaism was and is profoundly right. This proposal accords with the basic character of Jewish piety.

7. We may expect voices to be raised in opposition to this plan on the ground that it excludes the Jews who will not acccept it from the fellowship of Israel. This objection, too, is valid in part only. In the first place, no one is permanently excluded from the fold. Just as every Jew is at liberty to choose to affiliate himself with a congregation, so he is free to accept this set of minimum requirements. The difference is only that, in the former case, affiliation means the payment of so much money; in the latter, it means adherence to a way of life. The Jew, who continues to be totally indifferent to tradition is no worse off than he is now, except that the fact of his non-observance is brought home to him more forcibly. Perhaps, too, he will then be unable to taunt the affiliated Jew with being a hypocrite, for affiliation will no longer be interpreted as a mere financial transaction.

8. Why should those who pledge the observance of the "minimum" have any more regard for it than for the *"Shulhan Arukh,"* which they revere, in theory at least? The answer is that their sense of obligation, resulting from their personal pledge, is bound to reinforce whatever regard they have for the precepts of the *"Shulhan Arukh"* included in the proposed minimum.

9. How can our people be made to subscribe to the observance of the minimum code? The task, we may concede, will not be an easy one. We shall need to institute a series of *"teshuvah"* meetings, in which leading rabbis and laymen will call the people back to God and the law of Israel. Rabbis, convinced of the urgent need of reviving the spirit of piety among Jews, should turn themselves into itinerant preachers, traveling from city to city for this sacred purpose. Every Yom Kippur eve, those who are "converted" should publicly make their pledge. In time we may hope to make the observance of the minimum code, as formulated by a national assembly, mandatory upon every member of a Conservative or Orthodox Congregation.

10. Opposition may be voiced to this plan on the ground that the requested minimum may be interpreted as a maximum and that the net result would therefore be a radical break with tradition. The danger is, of course, a real one and it must be guarded against constantly. On the other hand, we cannot really believe that great numbers of our people will all at once become complete and perfect *baale teshuvah*. Our present-day re-

ligious anarchy has been explained as characteristic of the "frontier stage of Jewish life," but, unless we are willing to place our trust in miracles, we cannot expect the lines of the frontier to be pushed forward, except slowly and by degrees.

11. Once synagogue membership is redeemed from its present meaninglessness and the principle of observance of certain standards is generally accepted, it will be possible to increase steadily the list of minimum requirements. Progress and adaptation in Judaism today is impossible because there is no direct correlation between law and life. The sense of authority in Jewish life will be revived along with the consciousness of normative values.

A Note on "Authority in Jewish Life"

By IRA EISENSTEIN

DR. AGUS suggests a two-fold plan:

1. The creation of literature designed to reawaken piety among Jews;

2. The establishment of a minimum code, which all those Jews, whose souls are not entirely dead, will be urged to follow in their personal lives.

No one can take exception to Dr. Agus' plea for a literature on piety. Nor can anyone take exception to the idea of arousing Jews to the realization that they must take upon themselves a discipline of piety. The question arises, however: Wherein does this plan differ from that of some Reconstructionists whose exploratory formulations are to be found in "Toward a Guide for Jewish Ritual Usage?" In that guide, a sort of minimal program is set forth. Dr. Agus objects to the word "reasonable," in that presentation; yet he is himself attempting to be "reasonable" when he suggests that "a dam must be erected to stem the tide of indifference to Jewish law," and adds that the dam must not be too high or too low, because, if too high, "it will hold a very small number of Jews" and, if too low, "we will gain nothing by this procedure."

He is right in being reasonable, and not expecting too much; he is wrong in condemning the Reconstructionists for the same thing. He is wrong when he infers from the use of the word "reason" that the Reconstructionists expect religion to be "founded upon arguments of 'reasonableness'." I do not believe that they thus regard religion. They know that piety (the emotion and the intuition) must play a vital and decisive role. But they do insist that, in order to get Jews to understand the function of ritual, it must be explained to them in terms that they comprehend. Here, reason and reasoning enter. Dr. Agus himself must concede this, since he resorts to reasoning throughout his paper. What is the essay, if not a carefully reasoned presentation of why the discipline of Jewish piety is essential if Jewish life and the values of Jewish religion are to be preserved and enhanced?

Where Dr. Agus may differ from the Reconstructionists is in the selection of the practices and maxims of conduct. Very good! If the "representative body of Jewish laymen and rabbis" decides on a set of practices different from those of the Reconstructionists, I am certain that these matters of judgment can be ironed out.

The important fact is, however, that there is not much difference between Dr.

Agus and the Reconstructionists, and perhaps he is a better Reconstructionist than he thinks. The Jewish Reconstructionist Fellowship, just launched, is attempting to do just what he here suggests. Chapters, built around rabbinical leadership, will consist of men and women who are pledged to abide, in their personal lives, by a set of standards expressed in the resolution adopted by the organizing Conference. The text of that resolution appeared in the last issue of the RECONSTRUCTIONIST. It includes an abridgment of the application for membership in the Fellowship adopted by the Conference. The full text of the application follows:

I subscribe to the purposes of the Jewish Reconstructionist Fellowship which is dedicated to:

The advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization,

The upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland,

The furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

I, therefore, hereby apply for membership in the ..... Chapter of that Fellowship and agree to participate faithfully in its activities and to conform to its constitution and by-laws. Affirming my faith in the living God, I solemnly agree, in the conduct of my personal life, religiously to discharge the following obligations, to the best of my ability:

I. *I shall live my life publicly and privately as a Jew.*

I shall not deny or conceal the fact that I am a Jew. I shall establish a Jewish home that proclaims its Jewishness by Jewish symbols and observances, and the presence of objects of Jewish cultural significance. I shall endeavor to provide for my children the kind of Jewish education which will enable them to be intelligently loyal to the Jewish people and to find satisfaction and happiness in living their lives publicly and privately as Jews.

II. *I shall seek in Judaism the means for spiritual growth.*

I shall endeavor to develop those powers of body, mind and soul by which I can grow in wisdom, in the appreciation of all that is good and beautiful and in the power to help my fellow-men achieve a good and happy life. To this end, I shall seek inspiration and enlightenment in the religious and cultural heritage of the Jewish past and in the best products of intellectual, esthetic and ethical creativity of contemporary Jewry. And I shall endeavor to cultivate habits of worship, study and meditation for sustaining and developing in myself a personality worthy of the best that there is in Jewish life.

III. *I shall seek the maximum of fellowship and cooperation with other Jews to insure the survival of the Jewish people and the advancement of Jewish civilization.*

To this end, I shall affiliate myself with a Jewish congregation or such other Jewish association or associations as are devoted to the advancement of Judaism. I shall participate in the Zionist effort for the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home in Palestine and in movements that express the solidarity of American Jews with Jews in other parts of the world for promoting their common interest in Jewish survival and in the material and spiritual welfare of our people everywhere. I shall, in all Jewish institutions or associations to which I belong, seek their maximum cooperation with other Jewish institutions for the advancement of Judaism and their maximum contribution to the welfare of the American people and of mankind. And I shall endeavor zealously to guard the honor of Judaism by a life of irreproachable integrity and justice in all human relations, and a patriotic devotion to that American civilization which is the common concern of all religious,

cultural and racial groups and communities of American citizens.

IV. *I shall endeavor, in cooperation with other members of the Fellowship enrolled in my Chapter, to engage in the following activities for the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization*:

1. Dissemination of the principles of Reconstructionism and the enrollment of qualified persons as members of the Fellowship.
2. The study of Jewish problems with a view to their solution.
3. The revitalization of Jewish religion by the reinterpretation or revision of traditional Jewish beliefs and practices, by the development of new forms of worship expressive of modern religious attitudes, and by the free and candid discussion of religious and ethical problems.
4. The strengthening of Jewish communal institutions by encouraging the maximum collaboration among them with a view to the eventual establishment of a comprehensive, federated Jewish community organized and functioning in a democratic spirit.
5. Aiding in the upbuilding of Palestine as the Jewish National Home and as the organic center of Jewish civilization.
6. The encouragement of Jewish self-expression in literature and the arts.
7. The advancement of Jewish education as the major responsibility of the Jewish community, for the purpose of enabling Jews to enjoy, perpetuate, and enrich Jewish civilization under the conditions of modern life.
8. Spreading the knowledge and use of the Hebrew language and literature.
9. Participation in civic movements for social justice and general welfare, in cooperation with non-Jewish as well as Jewish communal agencies.

Book Notes

SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION. Third Symposium, Conference of Science, Philosophy and Religion. New York, 1943. *pp.* 438. $3.00.

THE papers included in this volume were prepared for the third meeting of a Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in Their relation to the Democratic Way of Life, held at Columbia University from August 27 to 31, 1942, and have been edited by Professors Lyman Bryson and Louis Finkelstein. At this meeting, an attempt was made to limit the discussion to a few unifying themes. The twenty-five statements in this volume, some by individuals and some by groups, revolve around five central themes—"The Problem of an Objective Basis for Value Judgments," "The Relation of the General Objectives of the Conference to the Problems of Education and Public Administration," "The Meaning of Human Dignity and Human Civilization in Terms of Various Disciplines," "The Historical Process and its Effect on Art, Music and Letters," and "The Significance of History for the Current Intellectual, Economic and Political Crisis." Even these themes are too broad and too varied to make for real unity of discussion, but at least they represent an advance over the first two symposiums. No reviewer can do justice to a volume

of such varied nature. What will be done therefore is to limit the discussion to some of the important central themes.

I

One of the important questions discussed was the nature of value judgments. An attempt was made to find an objective basis for such judgments. Considerations of objectivity in ethics are of importance in two distinct though related fields of inquiry. One branch of study may roughly be characterized as an investigation into the source of value, and the other an analysis of propositions about the good, the desired and the desirable. The title of Prof. Brightman's paper, "The Problem of an Objective Basis for Value Judgments," led one to assume that the discussion would center about the differences and similarities between scientific statements and value judgments. We are presented, however, with a paper which deals for the most part with the sources of value.

Inasmuch as the terms subjectivism and objectivism and ethics play so great a role in the discussion, it would be of utility if we roughly characterized the manner in which Brightman and, incidentally, most of the other contributors to the volume employ these terms. Objectivism, it would seem, is that doctrine which maintains that the term good is attributed to (or the attribute good is predicated of) certain objects by reason of some qualities they possess. Subjectivism leads to a diametrically opposed conclusion, namely, that values are dependent for their emergence on personal preferences, likes and dislikes. The word *good* therefore is attributed to those objects we like, those which satisfy our personal cravings.

Though Prof. Brightman champions the second alternative, he cannot entirely accept it. For if the phrase "X is good" means merely that "person A likes X," the intrinsic worth of X would always be problematic. Fascism would have to be considered good because some Germans like it. To avoid conclusions of this nature, he proposes to distinguish between values and norms. The latter are ideal conceptions of what ought to be. They are in some measure objective and independent of man.

All that would seem to be involved in Brightman's analysis is the elementary distinction between the desired and the desirable. As such the entire discussion would be accepted by subjectivists, who would insist that conceptions of the ideal remain subjective, being a product of that human faculty, imagination. It is not strange, therefore, to find that Pratt, who upholds subjectivism, insists that, save for differences of terminology, Brightman's position is identical with his. To be sure, he is cognizant of obvious distinctions in their outlook. Pratt is more severe with certain formulations of objectivism and dismisses them as meaningless. Furthermore, he does not agree that subjectivism must result in anarchy. Those objects which in point of fact do satisfy the most persistent of personal desires will be considered most valuable, even to the extent of being eternal, for any one human being. It would be unfair to conclude, therefore, that the two authors agree on every point. Many differences remain, but they are admittedly due to their metaphysical outlook, not their approach to ethics.

In view of the participation of Frank, the logical positivist, in the symposium, one anticipated a paper proving the entire discussion meaningless, or at the very best confusing, because of the lack of semantical sophistication. In the past, Frank and his colleagues have proven to be very capable destructive critics. He did not assume that role at this Conference, however, and seems to be the only one interested in the nature of value judgments, not in their source. He re-

tells the oft-repeated, but little understood story of the role relativity plays in modern science. Simple statements of location must be made relative to fields of gravity, statements of measurement relative to yardsticks and clocks which contract in motion. Two conclusions follow when these lessons are applied to considerations of ethics. One is the need of operational definitions of such concepts as God's will, categorical imperative, etc. The second would be that, inasmuch as physics, the pioneer science, employs notions of relativity, ethics, too, can achieve a scientific basis even though, starting from the field of human interest, no absolute judgment in ethics can be obtained. He illustrates his thesis by an analysis of the ethical law "You must not kill." He insists that this law cannot be universally applied. One is reminded of the more famous discussions and the similar conclusions which both Cohen and Santayana drew when analyzing this maxim.

The other papers in this section do not deal with the topic at all. Russell, an able physicist, attempts to prove that mechanism is an ally of ethics, and Nixon finds, in the concept of natural law, a moral basis for democracy. It is to be lamented that recent advances in empirical philosophy were not considered. Philosophers such as, Rice, Lepley, Dennes and, above all, Dewey, have shown that, when problems of ethics are considered in the light of man's place in society, the interests to be satisfied can be given empirical denotation. When the impact of behavioral psychology is felt, traits held to be subjective turn out to be objective biological phenomena. In failing to consider these more recent analyses, this section falls short of presenting us with satisfactory and original conclusions.

II

Contributors such as Beck, Outler, Ferré and Sorokin would reject the socio-psychological methods implied in an investigation of ethics. In order to illustrate their method, let us take a concrete example. Eli Ginsberg shows in his article that our system of higher education tends to strengthen class stratification. The critics mentioned above would insist that the ultimate ground for a condemnation of this tendency is derivable from, and only from, truths taught by a specific tradition. Often that thesis is formulated to read that, in point of fact, the highest and noblest truths are those taught only by one particular tradition. That is exactly the dogmatic position reached by R. Kroner when he insists that any belief other than that in the God of the Gospel is superstition. This apotheosis of Christian theology as the only true morality, a thesis very popular, especially at preceeding meetings of the conference, is severely criticized by Lyman Bryson. He demonstates that in cultural comparisons the word *normal* is either meaningless or relative to shifting cultural norms. It is cultural parochialism to judge the normality of a group on a scale of values derived from another group. It is blindness to think that a good society can be achieved only in the light of our own notions. We are in need of objective criteria to judge the "goodness" of a society, but surely such "goodness" can be achieved by all groups within their distinct teachings.

Many Christian theologians would admit that Bryson's castigation is just. Among the latter might be included such men as Outler and Ferré. They would insist, however, that a truer understanding of man can only be achieved through the insights derivable from their teachings. Their thesis is still to be proved, not dogmatically affirmed. The time when impartial investigators will accept their claim may never come. It certainly cannot be accepted without proof. In the interim, they might learn from some contributors to the volume that the very

terms they use must be operationally defined. Let us examine the concept of human dignity. We learn from Llewelyn that in law it can play a positive role merely in times of surplus, and from Bateson that it assumes pragmatic significance only in reference to specific class structures. It would be of utility to Beck, Sorokin, and others, not to forget that Einstein revolutionized our thinking when he redefined simultaneity.

Even if these theologians do not accept the force of this criticism, it might be questioned whether some of the expositions of Christianity presented are correct merely as an historical judgment. Ferré, for example, finds the doctrine of *agapé* (love based neither on biological desire nor on hope for reward) both the central motif of Christianity and an indispensable tool for the analysis of current culture. That certain Christian theologians evolved a philosophy based on this doctrine cannot be denied. But concepts of opposite connotation play identical roles. If Christian philosophy is the one which developed the concept of *agapé,* most teachings which usually are called Christian are a bundle of contradictions. But even if that concept did play a central role, the deductions drawn from it were often diametrically opposed to views dear to the hearts of all freedom-loving men. It cannot be denied that in the Middle Ages, the Church sanctioned in theory and practice a class-stratified society. Neither can Luther's stand at the time of the Peasant Revolt be overlooked.

As an additional footnote, it may be added that the distinctive American contribution to sociology has been the analysis of the role that language plays in the emergence of self-consciousness. Although many of these sociological generalizations are still to be corrected, it is already slightly anachronistic for Ferré and others to speak so glibly about the mystery of "self" and its dependability.

Nevertheless, no matter what the ultimate ground for an ethic might be, most contributors to the volume would agree that obvious social needs must be satisfied and obvious social faults corrected. We must remember that "while we have talked of brotherhood, we have been meaner to one another in many important areas (notably the economic) than are almost any of the beasts within their kind."

III

Most contributors to the symposium of art would agree with those critics who claim that the artist of the nineteenth century was a stranger in society. Although the general grounds for such an opinion are obvious, a detailed examination would lead to a variety of propositions, not merely one generalization. The place of an artist may refer to his economic standing or to the relevance of his work to other social efforts. It may be the lot of the artist to develop into a constant rebel against tradition, to fight for freedom to create new art forms and thus be perennially misunderstood. If the latter supposition is correct, the nature of art, rather than the nature of the nineteenth century should be examined.

The pages devoted to art deal very significantly with some of these issues. Venturi insists that the true greatness of art consists in the unity of form and content, contradicting the neo-classicist claim that contemporary art is suffering from a malady because its content is not spiritual. Indeed Venturi dismisses the pretentions of the neo-classicists as betraying a fascistic attitude. One does not have to accept Venturi's idealistic philosophy to admit that his formula for artistic greatness can stand as an answer to charges implied by John Nef. Nef insists upon the superiority of eighteenth century classical forms and asks for their revival in music, painting and poetry. We can not demand the reapplication of forms useful to older techniques. New experiences imply new

esthetic forms. This lesson, overlooked by Nef, was completely forgotten by Nicoll. The latter, after insisting that artists were not in harmony with their time (an ambiguous but oft repeated phrase), still condemns futurism and connects some manifestation of that movement with the rise of fascism. Venturi's analysis having disproved the claim that new forms lead to disharmony, other causes for the so-called malady of modern art must be sought.

While there is no necessary connection between the social system and the welfare of the artist, Constable points to some relevant factors in the new position of the artist. Among them are the decline of patronage, the rise of industrialism and the failure of tycoons to subsidize the artist. He insists that in a democracy the desire for the arts must come from the public, but is convinced that attempted solutions along the lines of art appreciation are meaningless jargon. "Steady cultivation of the power to perceive and judge the basic characteristics of the arts" is required. That educators rather than the individual are to be blamed for the general lack of such critical power is the thesis of Olga Samaroff Stokowski. After demonstrating that music has played different roles in different societies, she insists that only the discovery of polyphony made lasting works of music possible. Not till the invention of recording and the development of radio broadcasting did these treasures become universally available. As new vistas of musical appreciation are opened, new possibilities and new responsibilities must be considered.

Though no article in the volume carefully analyzes the exact nature of the disharmony between the artist and contemporary society, many cures are suggested. Arnold Walter warns the composer that, as a craftsman, he must work for his contemporaries and give up the desire for unrestricted freedom and novelty. We are not given any criteria for determining when a composer works for his contemporaries or whether the artist can be forced to follow these criteria, when and if they are propounded.

It is significant that the word capitalism does not occur in the book. It is quite possible that the legal molds of commercialism have given rise to a set of beliefs which necessarily exclude artistic efforts as useless. The solution may therefore be one requiring social change. To be sure, Constable hints at the need for the appointment of competent committees to choose artists for various jobs in conformity with the increasing collectivist trends in government and administration. This introduces the entire question of economic planning discussed in another section of the book; the section to which we now turn.

IV

In any consideration of economic planning the possibility of economic democracy is obviously the central problem. What economic democracy entails, the method of achieving it, and similar problems are considered by Clark, Heilperin, Dennison and other contributors. Dr. Clark develops the view that the transfer of democratic methods, employed in political affairs, to economic fields is not only inadequate, but may even lead to absurd consequences. Democritization should consist in using the economic set up for the benefit of the people — for example the guarantee of full employment. Dr. Clark does not answer those critics who insist that these aims are not achievable within the framework of our present economic system. He is more tentative in his approach, insisting that no complete *a priori* blue print is necessary. For the immediate future, he envisages the need for the reorganization of single industries into units sufficiently broad to have a collective interest in ex-

panding output. But such units, with power of enforcement, would be equivalent to cartels. Surely the history of western Europe in the last thirty years teaches us the danger implicit in these organizations. When such units are controlled by the government you have the spectre of a planned economy appearing, an alternative not desired by Dr. Clark nor by Dr. Heilperin in his defense of a "liberal economy."

There are two historic objections to "overall" planning: the impossibility of replacing the price system with a mode of production based not on market demand but need, and the inconsistency of political liberty with a collectivist planning. Dr. Heilperin develops the second argument and hints at the first. It is strange that the work of Lange and others who have shown the possibility of employing methods equivalent to pricing, but centrally controlled, is not considered. The danger of loss of liberty is evident, but is based on a false dilemma. The issue today is not collectivism versus individualism. Indeed, as Walton Hamilton wrote, the commitment to collectivism is beyond recall, but its form remains to be determined. Brady and other investigators have traced the growth of collectivism within business and industry. That these tendencies strengthen fascist movements is an historic fact. The word *individualism* remains merely as an intriguing word to cover up the growth of collectivism in industry. We gain little and lose much by bemoaning collectivism in general. We must determine operationally and carefully the public control of the collective scheme, the type of planning, and the establishment of the necessary new institutions. When democratic use of the industrial machine is honestly made, the freedom lost will be comparable to the freedom lost in scientific research when free, imaginative guesses are ruled out and the only results accepted are those arrived at by a method which is public, repeatable, and according to objective standards. Just as the outcome of a scientific experiment determines the method to be pursued, so the very nature of the society desired should determine our plans for its attainment. Social scientists demanding a planned economy do not expect society to adopt one particular scheme; what is asked for is that society develop some method of planning which will satisfy its needs and avoid the present anarchic state of our social organization.

V

The sole article devoted to a Jewish topic, that by Rabbi Bokser on "Rabbinic Tradition and a Doctrine of Society," answers effectively all critics who maintain that ethical notions have played no role in Jewish thinking since the close of the prophetic period. To be sure, Bokser's primary interest is not one of apologetics, but one of proving that the concept of ethical monotheism (implying one purpose in the universe) can be translated into political terms and regarded as one of the necessary aims of society, namely, the need of maximum unity. There is another metaphysical assumption that is to be considered. The rabbinic view that everything in the universe was created for a distinct purpose will serve to remind us of the need of maximum diversity as well as unity.

Many insist that a democratic approach would negate notions of one superior group. The Jewish notion of the chosen people would thereby be relegated to the limbo of outmoded concepts. Dr. Bokser affirms the former proposition, but negates the latter. He maintains that in Rabbinic thought the idea of the chosen people is an elliptical mode of expressing the outlook that each particular group has a specific function. In other words, the polarity of man and mankind can only be mediated through distinct so-

cial groups. There are merely two comments that need be made. As a consideration of the Rabbinic position, it is obviously incomplete. Those aspects of traditional Judaism which block democratic action are not considered. As a tract for political science the terms suggested are so vague that most of the propositions he affirms are, in point of fact, not testable. To prove that the latter assertion is a valid one would, however, take us too far afield.

Perhaps the chief value of the book is the proof that in these critical times not all scholars are irresponsible. The obvious desire of many of the contributors to help create a better world will find favor in the eyes of men long after the contents of the book will be forgotten. It is to be hoped that the doctrine of the dignity of man, accepted by all the contributors, will serve as an incentive to discover and remove those historic encumbrances which have blocked the growth of human beings. The dignity of the common man should instill in us the desire to better his lot, not to rest content with singing hymns of praise in his honor.

SIDNEY MORGANBESSER

Music Notes

By JUDITH K. EISENSTEIN

ANYONE who has read Koestler's novel, "Arrival and Departure," will have a perpetual memory of certain terrifying episodes. One of these is the macabre picture of the old "useless Jews" going to their death, stepping in pairs from the crowded cattle cars into the maws of the annihilation van. As they proceed they sing a song, "*Vos vet sein as Moshiah vet kumen.*" The song is an old one. How many of us have sung it with a smile for its sweet naivete, with amusement mixed with some condescension? Never again! When we can bear to sing it again we will be haunted by those dark images that Koestler showed us. Each "*bimbom,*" once a source of hilarity to a carefree generation, will now bring us a shudder. It will be the sound of the door shutting closed on its victims.

I have had a similar experience—though it was not nearly so profound—with the song, *"Eliyahu Hanavi."* Years ago, when the Habimah Theatre came to New York, they produced *"The Golem."* In that play the closing scene was a very moving one. A group of Jews is huddled in the attic of the synagogue, awaiting a pogrom. Elijah the prophet, unrecognized and unwelcome, is departing slowly from their midst, and they sing with longing and prayer, "Elijah the prophet, may he come speedily and in our day." I have never sung this song at the close of a Sabbath without a vivid recollection of that scene. And now Koestler has taken another *Melaveh Malkah* song, and raised it from its mean position to the rank of a hymn of martyrs, an unforgettable Dance of Death.

Perhaps we need such scenes to reveal to us the tremendous emotional power which still is inherent in the cast-off songs of the ghetto, songs scorned by the musicologists and abandoned by young Zionists. The great songs of the ghetto may not have the idiomatic purity of the Biblical cantillation, or the antiquity of the prayer modes. They may not even be grist for

the mills of composers, because they cannot endure without their texts and they cannot be broken up into minute musical ideas.

But these songs contain the heartbeat of generations of our people, of our own immediate forbears, and of hundreds of thousands who may still be wandering about the wilderness of Europe. The Kaddish of the Berditchever Rebbe we have already spoken of many times. It is a song such as this. It, too, is a song that can bring up soul-shaking memories. Another is the old and nearly forgotten song, *"Al Tira Avdi Yaakov,"* "Have no fear my servant Jacob." Still another is *"Meierke, mein Suhn,"* (and I do not refer to the cheap music hall version of this song, but to the noble and beautiful version which Ravel saw fit to arrange for voice and piano.)

Do we require a whole novel or a complete drama to show us the quality of a song like *"Die Alte Kashe"?* And what of an art song born of the ghetto such as Milner's *"In Cheder"?* We need artistry, it is true, to draw forth the hidden life in these songs, in all its quivering reality; either the artistry of words, or of painting, or of the dance, or perhaps sheer artistry in singing. But unless we know these songs and teach them to our children we will have lost touch with our own folk.

The great vitality of these songs springs from two potent sources. First, they grew out of a way of life which was indigenous, which was unique and which was rich in color and flavor. They grew out of the real and sometimes terrible situations which confronted the folk, and they often constituted their sole solution. Second, they are expressions of a conviction, a firm and unwavering faith which the folk had in its own destiny. We can hardly expect the Diaspora of our time to produce such songs. Palestine has these two conditions. It is developing the way of life, and the Yishuv has had the faith in its own destiny. Palestine is in the process of creating new songs which will some day achieve the third condition for greatness, through the trial by time, the mellowing and rounding off of edges which age alone can give to a folk song.

We who live in America stand between the moribund ghetto of Europe and the youthful growing Yishuv of Palestine. We need to borrow strength of heart from both, and the songs of the ghetto still have a great deal to offer. Though it is hardly likely that we shall develop a sufficiently unique way of life in this country to produce a folk song, we may very well achieve a sufficient conviction of our own destiny to produce a great religious music. Our composers may, and undoubtedly will, turn to the ancient and austere chants for their musical material But pure artistic detachment will never evolve a great religious music. They will need the faith of the Berditchever Rebbe and his unnamed colleagues to fire their music into greatness. And we will need to know that faith in order to respond to the greatness.

* * *

We are happy to see that the *New Palestine* has introduced a page on music. We felicitate them on this evidence of a growing interest in the arts as an integral part of Jewish life, and particularly on their good fortune in having Mr. Joseph Yasser as their columnist. His scholarship and taste are unparalleled in the field of Jewish music, and his opinion should be an invaluable guide to our public. *Hazak ve-ematz—New Palestine* and Mr. Yasser.

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